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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 002126

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: CHEN ENDORSES SOONG QINGHUA SPEECH, PREPARES FOR SOONG-HU MEETING

REF: A. TAIPEI 1977

[¶](#)B. TAIPEI 2114

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

[¶](#)11. (C) Summary: President Chen Shui-bian welcomed People First Party (PFP) Chairman James Soong's references to Taiwan in Soong's May 11 speech to Beijing's Qinghua University. Chen used a significantly milder tone than other ruling party officials, who criticized Soong's assertion that independence is not an option for Taiwan's future. The Presidential Office also issued a formal clarification over the government's stance on the "1992 consensus" in an effort to set the stage for Soong's May 12 meeting with PRC leaders. A senior Chen aide confirmed that the "message" Chen asked Soong to pass to Hu Jintao was that Chen is willing to engage in dialogue with Beijing using a more flexible "1992" formulation. Aides dismissed the significance of media polls showing a drop in Chen's support rate, noting that an internal Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) projection of likely voters showed a significant upward bounce for the DPP following the President's controversial May 9-10 television interviews. End Summary.

Better Than Lien, but Still "Too Chinese"

[¶](#)12. (C) President Chen Shui-bian publicly praised PFP Chairman James Soong's May 11 speech at Beijing's Qinghua University for highlighting Taiwan's accomplishments. Chen's mild tone contrasted with criticism from other DPP officials, who took issue with Soong's decision to reiterate his position that independence is not an option for Taiwan's future. National Security Council (NSC) Senior Advisor, and Chen confidante, Lin Jin-chang told AIT that the President was pleased that Soong spoke positively about Taiwan, even if the general tone of Soong's address "was about as Chinese as Lien's."

Laying Down a Quiet Marker

[¶](#)13. (C) The Presidential Office also released a press release on May 11 to clarify the government's stance on the "1992 consensus" ahead of Soong's May 12 meeting with PRC leaders. The press statement reiterates the Chen administration's position that the "four characters -- 1992 consensus (jiu er gong shi)" were invented by then-Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Chairman Su Chi in 2000. However, the statement goes on to state that the 1992 Hong Kong talks had major historical significance, and that "President Chen has said many times that he hopes the two sides can look positively on the achievements that resulted from the consultative process." The NSC's Lin said that the statement was put out in order to avoid the need to respond to anything Soong says in public after his meeting with Hu. "We don't want to contradict him if he publicly accepts the '1992 consensus,'" Lin remarked, "so this way we can simply refer back to the May 11 press release without closing the door to future discussions of alternate '1992' formulations."

[¶](#)14. (C) Lin confirmed that the "message" Chen requested Soong to convey on April 20 to Hu Jintao concerned options for moving beyond the "1992" deadlock (Ref A). Lin said that the President asked Soong to tell Hu that Taipei is prepared to find a new formulation that references exchanges between the two sides during and after the 1992 Hong Kong talks as a platform for restarting a formal political dialogue. Lin added that the PFP has promised to provide the Presidential Office a full private briefing on the PRC reaction to the offer after Soong returns from Beijing. The Presidential Office does not expect Soong to make reference to discussions on the "1992" formulation during his public remarks in Beijing.

[¶](#)15. (C) Lin clarified that President Chen will not make a major policy address on May 20, adding that Premier Frank Hsieh misspoke on May 9 when he touted the purported speech (Ref B). Lin said that after the May 14 National Assembly (NA) election, Chen will seek to engage both KMT Chairman Lien Chan and Soong on creating a domestic consensus in support of cross-Strait engagement. If this can be achieved, the President then plans to reach out privately to Washington

and, if possible, Beijing to explain Taipei's planned policy direction. Only then, Lin added, would the President make a major public address on cross-Straits policy. "Otherwise, it would just be another unilateral restatement of Chen's personal thinking," Lin added.

NA Election: DPP on the Rebound?

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**16. (C)** Despite criticism of Chen's recent public attacks on Taiwan political leaders, DPP officials said an internal projection completed on May 11 showed a clear up-tick in the DPP's prospects for the May 14 NA election. Officials claim that the DPP and KMT are running nearly neck-and-neck, with both far ahead of the TSU and, especially, the PFP. Long-time DPP polling guru Chen Chun-lin dismissed two newspaper polls published on May 11 suggesting flagging public support for Chen's leadership. Chen stated that "70 percent of those polled are not going to vote on May 14." Chen added, "its the DPP core supporters who will vote that we are worried about and that is where we have seen the upward spike over the past two days." The NSC's Lin told AIT that Chen will give another television address on May 12, this time to highlight the fact that the TSU opposes the constitutional reforms that will be voted on by the NA. Lin noted that the President's recent public speeches were crafted for Pan-Green supporters, and not the public at large, thus the President is unconcerned about criticism from other quarters.

**17. (C)** Lin acknowledged that Chen's recent rhetoric has not contributed positively to an atmosphere of cross-Straits reconciliation, but said that politicians in Taiwan, including James Soong and Lien Chan, all understand that hyperbole is an essential element of election campaigns. Lin said that Chen's relations with Lee Teng-hui and the TSU may be more difficult to repair, but added that the DPP really doesn't need the TSU's support anyway. Lin said that the Presidential Office will attempt to move quickly after May 14 to arrange a meeting with the two Pan-Blue leaders in order to break the logjam over the Special Defense Procurement Budget.

Comment: Staying the Course

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**18. (C)** There are growing expectations in the President's inner circle that Soong may be able to secure a new formulation from Hu Jintao over "1992" that may pave the way for a more formalized dialogue. The contents of the Soong-Hu meeting may not be immediately apparent, as Soong is not expected to reveal any new formulations agreed upon until his return to Taipei later in the week. In this context, it is encouraging that the President is preparing to offer a low-key response to whatever public message comes out of the Soong-Hu meeting. If he can keep his rhetoric over the NA election within bounds between now and May 14, prospects for a post-NA ruling-opposition summit to work towards a consensus on cross-Straits policy and the Special Defense Budget appear to remain on track.

PAAL